

## Abandoned Uranium Mines and Mill Sites

When in the late 1980's demand for uranium ceased, several hundred uranium mines, mills, and waste products were left abandoned and inadequately remediated. Through a screening and assessment process, the U.S. EPA is able to estimate that there are approximately 520 Abandoned Uranium Mines (AUM) and 5 uranium mill sites on the Navajo Nation and of those, in McKinley County alone there are an estimated 120 AUM, of which 80% are on Navajo lands.<sup>1</sup> The uranium mine and mill sites not only pose health threats for people living near them but are also potential sources of air, soil and groundwater contamination.<sup>1</sup>

1. Addressing Uranium Contamination on the Navajo Nation. Available at: <http://www.epa.gov/region9/superfund/navajonation/abandoned-uranium.html>

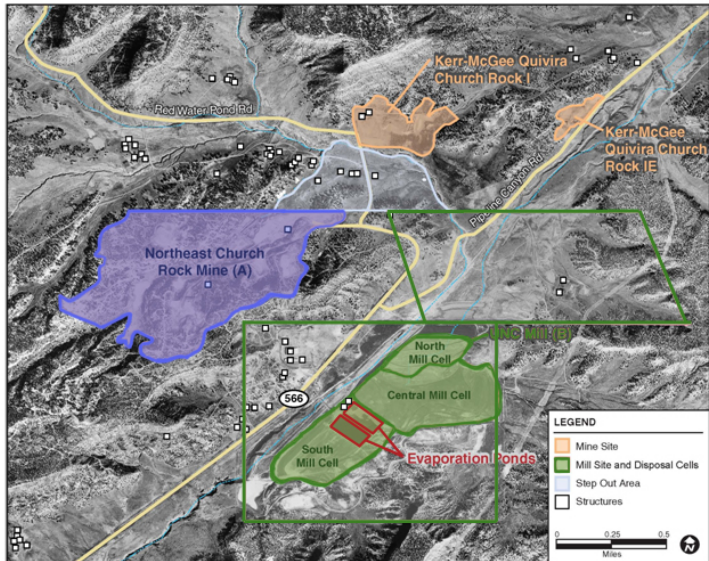
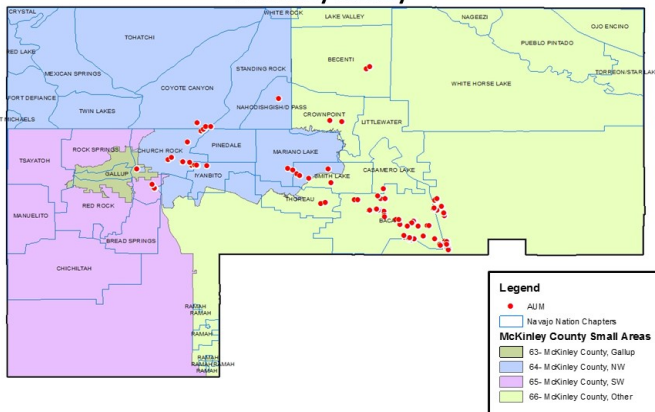


Figure 1: Northeast Church Rock Mine and United Nuclear Corporation site map

### Abandoned Uranium Mines McKinley County



Maps created by New Mexico Community Data Collaborative Staff (<http://nmcdc.maps.arcgis.com/home/>)  
Geospatial data source: Navajo Nation AUM Screening Assessment Report and Atlas with Geospatial Data (available at: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r9/sfnd/r9sfndocw.nsf/3dc2836c5d6056f88257426007417a2/8e43f74d2f55b845882573f400787a8e>)

## Looking Within: Uranium Mining Health Impacts

### McKinley Community PLACE MATTERS February 2015

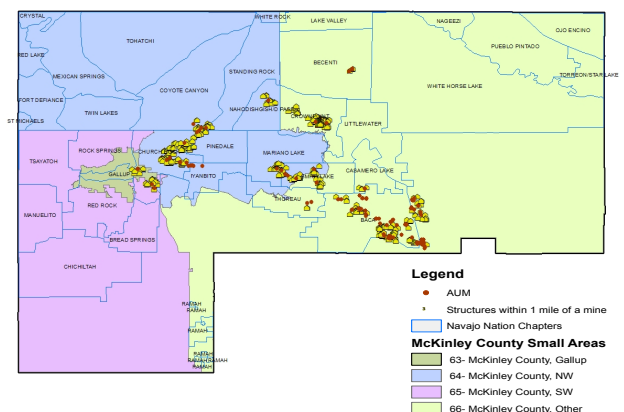


The Diné Policy Institute in their Uranium and Diné Benitseekees Position Paper 1, provides an explanation of the Navajo Traditional Philosophical paradigm of *Sa'ah Naghai Bik'e Hozhoon* which is the philosophy of living "that tends toward walking a balanced life, with longevity and resilience" in sustained harmony (*K'e*). A portion of *K'e* is "the rights and freedoms of the people to use the sacred elements of life... must be accomplished through... respect ... to protect and preserve beauty of the natural world for future generations."<sup>2</sup>

It is important to understand the cultural relevance of environmental restoration among the Navajo people. Because the Navajo people share a high regard for the sacred nature of the environment and link their psychological well being to environmental stability, the role of environmental cleanup in psychological healing should not be taken lightly.<sup>3</sup>

2. M. Benally, A. Speen, and C. Goldtooth. (2005) *Uranium and Diné Benitseekees: An Analysis of the direct and in-direct consequences of uranium using Navajo principles*. Diné Policy Institute.  
3. Markstrom, C. & Charley, P. (2003). *Psychological Effects of Technological/Human-Caused Environmental Disasters: Examination of the Navajo and Uranium*. *Journal of the National Center*. 11(1):19-45.

### Structures within 1 mile of an Abandoned Uranium Mine



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